

August Open House Final Public Meeting Summary

Michigan Department of Transportation State Long-Range Transportation Plan 2005 - 2030



**Prepared for
The Michigan Department
of Transportation**

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Executive Summary

This report summarizes the public input collected for the *Michigan State Long-Range Transportation Plan* (MI Transportation Plan) at the August Open House Public Meetings. The open houses are the second in a series of two rounds of public meetings for the MI Transportation Plan.

After reviewing the Draft Vision and related materials participants identified the following as strengths;

- Consideration of all transportation modes;
- Safety;
- Security;
- Focus on working with the handicapped and people with disabilities; and
- Land use and transportation.

Participants were also asked what was needed to make the Draft Vision stronger. The top suggestions were:

- More detailed and stronger wording of the document;
- Greater consideration of the needs of all demographic groups;
- Increase in choice of modes;
- Better integration of modes;
- More focus on transit; and
- Additional information on transportation funding.

There was general agreement on the Draft Vision at all open house locations and very few regional differences were identified in the comments received.

Chapter 1. Introduction

This report documents the public participation process and public input collected for the *Michigan State Long-Range Transportation Plan* (MI Transportation Plan) open houses held August 7 through 17, 2006. All open houses had the same set-up, display boards, PowerPoint presentation, and informational materials.

The open houses were the second of two rounds of public meetings for MI Transportation Plan. During each round, public meetings were scheduled in different locations to allow greater participation across the state.

The purposes of the open houses were to:

- Inform and educate the public about the Draft Vision and its key values and characteristics, developed with input from the Economic Advisory Group (EAG) meetings, March/April open houses, stakeholder interviews, stakeholder workshops, the Transportation Summit, and household participation studies;
- Receive public input and comment on the Draft Vision; and
- Inform the public about the MI Transportation Plan.

The following outreach activities publicized these open houses:

- A press release, distributed to MDOT's media contact list;
- Open house information, including locations and dates, posted on the project Web site;
- Open house flyers mailed to approximately 900 stakeholders; and
- Open house flyers e-mailed to numerous stakeholders and transit providers.

The press release and open house flyer are included in Appendix A of this document.

Chapter 2. Open House Format

MDOT held 14 open houses for the MI Transportation Plan at strategic locations across the state (as shown in Figure 1):

- Novi
- Kalamazoo
- Warren
- Detroit
- Grand Rapids
- Flint
- Lansing
- Ann Arbor
- Mount Pleasant
- Tawas City
- Kingsford
- Traverse City
- Ironwood
- St. Ignace

Figure 1 Public Meeting Locations Second Round

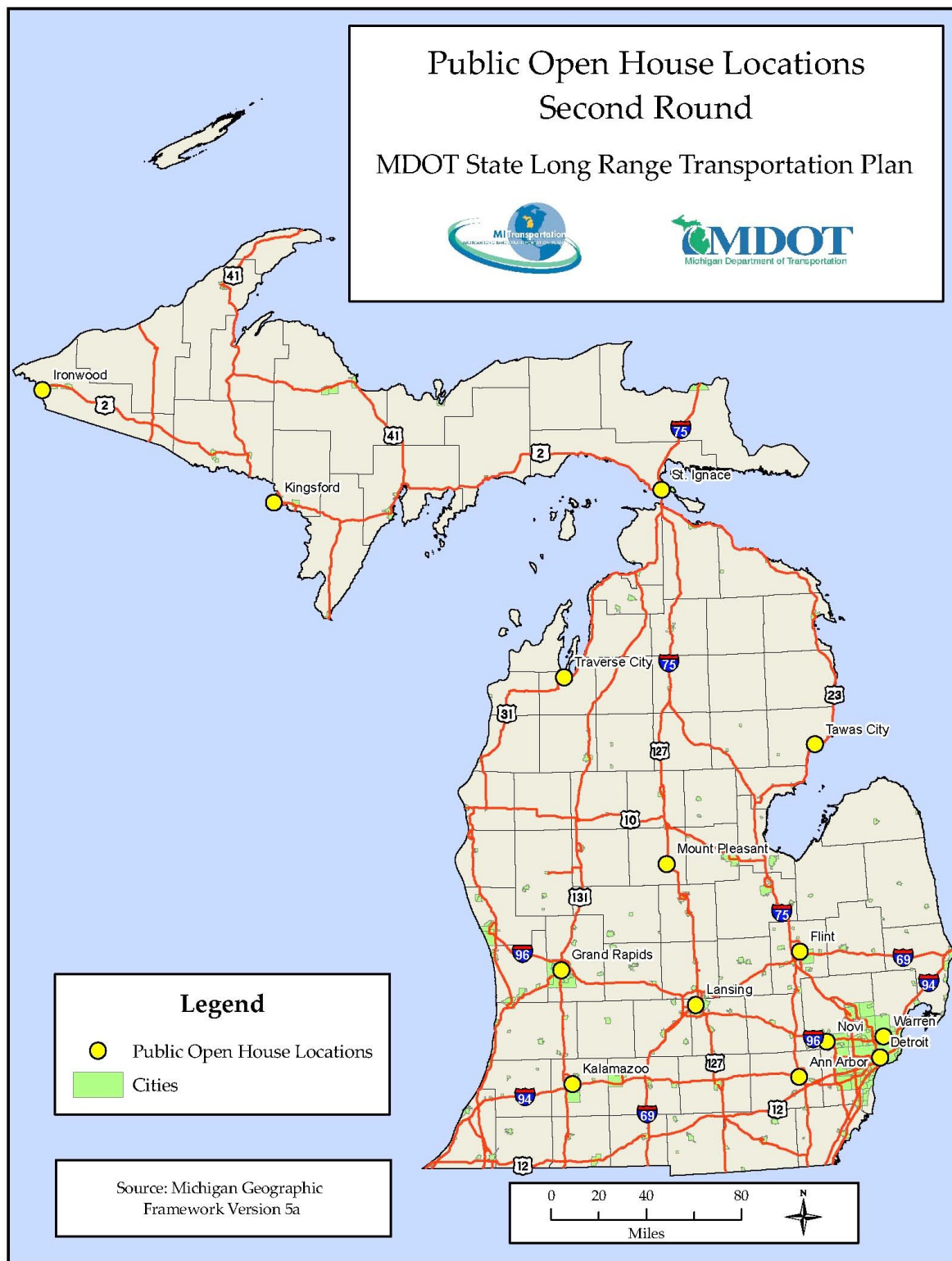


Table 1. Open House Attendance by Location

<i>Location</i>	<i>Number of Attendees</i>
Novi	12
Kalamazoo	12
Warren	6
Detroit	7
Grand Rapids	15
Flint	6
Lansing	14
Ann Arbor	24
Mount Pleasant	8
Tawas City	6
Kingsford	4
Traverse City	25
Ironwood	9
St. Ignace	8
Total	156

Open house participants included a mixture of representatives from local and regional planning organizations, transit providers, human service groups, economic development associations and members of the general public. All open houses took place from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and were set up with seven stations organized as follows:

2.1 Station 1

At each location, participants signed in at Station 1 and received several items: a state highway map, a name tag, bookmark and project Web card. Meeting handouts were also distributed at this station including a Draft Public Vision Value and Characteristics Handout, a description of the technical reports and a Fast Facts Sheet containing fun Michigan transportation facts.

Arabic and Spanish translators and handouts were available at both the Warren and Detroit meeting locations. All Handouts were available in large print at all meetings to aid the visually impaired

2.2 Station 2

Station 2 offered a 10 minute PowerPoint slide show with voiceover that provided background on the project, detailed information about the visioning process, and the Draft Vision. The slide show also included welcome and closing comments from MDOT Director, Kirk Steudle.

2.3 Station 3

At this station participants were invited to sit down with project team members to discuss the Draft Vision and answer the following questions:

- What elements of the Draft Vision are on target?
- What elements of the Draft Vision are not on target?
- What is missing from the Draft Vision?
- What changes would make the Draft Vision stronger?

Discussion tables and several easel pads were available to participants for posting their input. The easel pads allowed other participants to review and comment on previous answers/comments.

2.4 Station 4

Station 4 offered three boards summarizing the information developed to date on corridors and integration. The two corridors boards introduced the corridor approach to be used in the final vision and plan document to open house attendees. The integration board reinforced the concept that the MI Transportation Plan will strive to encompass all modes and help to develop policy to remove barriers between activities. A project team member was available at the station to discuss the boards with participants and answer any questions.

2.5 Station 5

Station 5 consisted of one board displaying the process flowchart. A project team member was available at the station to discuss the flow chart with participants and answer any questions.

2.6 Station 6—Comment Station

At the comment station, attendees could fill out comment forms or provide their comments through CommentWorks.com. MDOT staff was present to answer questions and assist participants in using CommentWorks.com or filling out comment forms.

2.7 Station 7—Kid's Corner

A kid's corner table was set up at each open house location. The table provided transportation-related activity sheets and coloring and drawing supplies for children.

Chapter 3. Open House Summary

At each open house, participants were asked to review the Draft Vision and related materials and provide feedback as to what components need to be revised or added. To engage attendees the project team developed four standard questions that were asked at the Station 3 Vision Discussion table and were included on the open house comment form:

- What elements of the Draft Vision are on target?
- What elements of the Draft Vision are not on target?
- What is missing from the Draft Vision?
- What changes would make the Draft Vision stronger?

The following is a summary of the responses received by question.

Copies of all open house comment forms and CommentWorks comments collected at and during the August meetings on the project Web site are located in Appendix B for your reference.

3.1 What elements of the Draft Vision are on target?

Overall open house participants agreed with the components of the Draft Vision and felt it was on target. There were a number of specific elements that participants noted as being on target. Participants liked the fact that the Draft Vision focused on connectivity and considered all modes of travel. One participant noted “The need for walkability and bicycle access are so important to take cars off the road.”

Physical and economic access to transportation for all citizens should be an important focus of this Draft Vision. Participants noted that it is imperative to promote the importance of working with the older population and people with disabilities throughout the planning process.

Other elements of the Draft Vision identified by participants as on target include safety, security, and connection between land use and transportation. These are very important elements that should be addressed in all future transportation projects and plans.

3.2 What elements of the Draft Vision are not on target?

When asked what elements of the Draft Vision are not on target, open house participants identified that there was a lack of public involvement and education included in the Draft Vision. One participant noted that a public committee should be established to participate in the development of the MI Transportation Plan. It was felt that the public needs to be more involved in this planning process. Any future involvement of the public should include representation from urban, suburban and rural areas of the state.

Some participants thought the issue of transit was not well developed in the Draft Vision, one sentence on transit is not enough. It was suggested that the transit segment of the Draft Vision

needs to be strengthened and more detailed. Participants want to know what type of transit is envisioned, where will it be located, and how will it be funded.

Another issue identified as not on target was financing. More information needs to be provided on where funding will come from, who will pay, and what alternative funding options are available. New funding schemes need to be identified for the future.

In general, participants felt the entire Draft Vision needs to be worded more strongly and that some priority of ideas should be developed. Many participants felt the Draft Vision lacked a sense of urgency and commitment.

3.3 What is missing from the Draft Vision?

Participants identified a number of elements that they felt were missing from the Draft Vision. Below is a summary of common elements and concepts identified as missing:

- Commitment to public involvement and education
- Coordination with state agencies and regional and local authorities
- Emphasis on the needs of all demographic groups, specifically the older population, younger people, and people with disabilities
- Tourism
- Alternative funding options
- Focus on the environment/Alternative fuel options
- Additional transit options
- Connectivity between modes of transportation and cities/towns
- A sense of priority among issues

At meetings held in the Upper Peninsula participants specifically identified that preservation of rail rights-of-way was missing from the Draft Vision. It was also suggested that the Draft Vision include some recognition or concern regarding issues unique to the Upper Peninsula.

3.4 What changes would make the Draft Vision stronger?

Meeting participants felt that the Draft Vision could be strengthened by adding stronger, more specific language and additional details. Participants also requested more information on how the vision would be implemented and how it would be financed.

Funding was a big concern. Participants would like the Draft Vision to include more detailed information on funding and alternative funding options. It is important that people are aware of and understand what funding options are available.

It was requested that more information on transit recommendations be provided in the Draft Vision. Recommendations need to be stronger and more detailed. Participants want to see a commitment to fund public transit and improve and expand existing services.

Participants also noted that there should be more focus on economic development and access to jobs.

At meetings held in the Upper Peninsula and Northern section of the state, participants felt improved east/west highway connections and more emphasis on freight rail would help make the Draft Vision stronger.

3.5 Additional Comments

At the end of each comment form, open house participants were provided with the opportunity to provide the project team with additional comments on the Draft Vision and the open house meetings. We received a number of positive responses praising the open house process and encouraging MDOT to continue their good work.

There were several comments requesting that more information about the MI Transportation Plan be made available to the public. Two participants inquired about where they could locate a copy of the existing plan to review.

The need for improved maintenance and preservation of existing roads and infrastructure was identified by participants as an issue that needed to be included in the Draft Vision. New roads or additional capacity on existing roads are not needed in most areas.

It was also noted by participants that MDOT needs this plan to help Michigan enhance economic vitality, through an improved state transportation system. It was also suggested that MDOT needs to continue to work hard to help Michigan cities compete with cities (New York, Chicago and Washington D.C.) with more advanced transportation systems across the country.

Chapter 4. Overall Open House Summary

4.1 Conclusion

August open house participants were generally satisfied with the proposed Draft Vision presented. Attendees provided well-voiced suggestions on what needs to be added to and revised in the Draft Vision. These suggestions will also be included in the development of the draft plan.

The wording of the Draft Vision needs to be stronger and provide more detail. Participants felt that the existing language is too vague and will be difficult for MDOT to enforce. Several participants noted that the Draft Vision was very technical which made it difficult for some to understand. People felt there needed to be more of a sense of urgency within the document.

It was made clear that participants want the Draft Vision to address the needs of all demographic groups. More and improved transportation options were requested for the older population, young adults, and people with disabilities.

Participants also expressed a desire for greater integration between modes of travel. People want to have the option of taking a train or bus directly to an airport or transportation facility.

The need for improved and expanded transit service was also identified by participants as something that needed to be strengthened and enhanced in the Draft Vision. Participants want to see a mass transit system. Many noted that Detroit and the surrounding suburbs need a transit system to compete with other large cities. Participants could not comprehend why so many other cities have mass transit and Detroit does not. With the price of gas and oil continuing to increase, a mass transit system would provide local residents with an excellent alternative to driving.

Existing bus and paratransit routes also need to be enhanced and improved. Service providers need to address issues other than just getting people to and from work. Transit riders need these services to get to doctors appointments, visit their families and friends, and maintain their quality of life.